

Using Mobile App for Employee Performance Appraisals

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<p>This research is to analyse the importance of using Mobile app in employee performance appraisal processes. Managers and hr professionals have criticised current systems for several reasons, for instance because they do not reflect the desired results or address overall weaknesses.</p> <p>Different theoretical frameworks were used in this study, including theories, models and concepts linked to performance management in general and performance appraisals in particular, as the topic covers two different subjects, that is, performance appraisals and mobile applications.</p> <p>Theories and concepts related to mobile applications were studied to prove the importance of using a mobile app for employee performance appraisal procedures.</p> <p>The research used primary and secondary data in order to gather valuable information to answer the research problem. A variety of books, journals, thesis, articles and websites were used for the secondary research. In addition, the author conducted a qualitative inter-views to obtain first hand insights from five HR experts which were interviewed face-to-face and via Email.</p> <p>The research indicates there are many benefits in using a mobile app for employee performance appraisals, albeit there are some challenges along the way. Specifically, the study shows that mobile app usage will dramatically increase communication between management and subordinates, which is attributed as the main problem for review processes. The research also found that using a mobile app will eliminate appraiser bias and other bias related practices, another major source of performance appraisal problems.</p> <p>Conclusions and some recommendations related to the importance and challenges of using mobile app in employee performance appraisal are presented at the end of the research paper.</p>	
Keywords Performance Management, Performance appraisal, Mobile App, Performance Assessment, Employee evaluation, Mobile Application, Online App, PA.	

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1 Introduction

Employee performance appraisal has long been considered a troublesome and most difficult management task to undertake. (Dessler, 2009,207.) Human resources professionals and academics criticized for not meeting its required potential of neither addressing the problem area nor contributing to individual growth.

The majority of the issues mentioned are not overly inherent in the system itself but also there are issues which are the result of grave mistakes committed by those performing the evaluation, appraiser error and personal bias is considered a big part of the system's shortcomings. Lack of proper communication and information follow have profound impact on the success of the appraising process, communication is deemed very important by managers and professionals because conveying the right information at the right time has tremendous effect on both parts.

This has triggered the demand for further research to be conducted on the subject and to shed light on new perspectives that might lead to lasting solution to the matter, many professionals have attempted to settle this issue but have not succeeded to this day. However, the huge demand for answers calls to explore different approaches and this research looks at new direction which has not been adequately studied yet, a direction that might yield so much potential to finally crack the problematic nature of employee performance appraisals.

As technology advances in dramatic fashion throughout the world its permissible to study whether using or exploiting mobile app could solve or at least improve the appraisal issues. Thus, prompting to study the subject of the importance of using mobile app in the employee performance appraisal process or to prove any link that these two subjects might correlate.

1.1 Background

Employee performance appraisal system is one of the most important but complicated and difficult process human resource professionals utilise (Dessler 1999, 190).

For decades the challenges of performance review systems have been rocking firms, many changes have been made that range from traditional to modern, formal and informal, the introduction of software systems and the use of the technology. However, none of these attempts made any clear cut impact to solve the issues, the adversity of appraising employees has always been a major concern among organisations and HR professionals.

Nowadays an increasing number of businesses are either docking or have already shunned the formal annual appraisals and opted toward a regular and constant dialogue with employees, this step has called for the need of suitable tools to optimize the evaluation results, thanks to the advancing technology and the development of mobile apps which can be handy to solve this matter, at least for the time being. This thesis is aiming to shed light and present new ideas for the importance of mobile applications to evaluate twenty first century and millennial workforce's performances and to today's ever changing industries.

The research will be concentrating on the importance of mobile applications in performance review processes and why HR departments should have their own app, after concluding the research the final outcome will provide comprehensive ideas to human resources professionals on this subject in general.

1.2 Research Question

In this research the main objective is to provide an idea on the importance of mobile application usage in employee performance review systems, this also offer a deeper look at certain elements in the process and the reasons behind the need of human resource professionals to adapt their own mobile application for appraising employees. The research will also shed light on current state of the mobile app industry, the new trends and how to develop department's own application.

The research question has been concluded as follows:

How does the use of mobile applications improve employee performance appraisal processes?

IQ 1. Why HR departments should have own performance appraisal app?

IQ 2. What are the advantages of utilising mobile apps for employee appraisal and How it motivates?

IQ 3. How HR departments' own performance appraisal mobile app system could be developed?

1.3 Demarkation

The idea of Demarcation is essentially to limit the thesis research to a level where it can be relatively manageable so that it doesn't become too broad for the allocated time frame. Demarcation also ensures the research problem is kept in check and doesn't become too shallow or vague and become challenging to cover in this bachelor thesis. As the author

mentioned earlier, this topic is generally rather broad, therefore, the demarcation criteria is going to be that the research will only concentrate on the research questions and the research objectives.

Performance appraisal and Mobile App is a challenging topic to demarcate easily, to make matters even worse the research is not commissioned or done for specific company which would normally narrow down their demand and give the author specific areas to concentrate. Another problem is the fact that the phenomena is fairly new and there are not much theories written about it. However, the author will only focus on the importance of utilising mobile app for employee performance review processes which will help narrow the research scope.

This research will not be included performance management and appraisal software because the topic is about relationship between performance review and the use of mobile applications. Also to include these other aspects will render the research too big, proving too difficult to manage such a huge and challenging subject.

1.4 International Aspects

This research is comprised of two different themes which are; employee performance review which is an important component in systematic approach of human resource management which is widely used by human resource professionals across the globe. On the other hand, the research also covers mobile applications which are internationally utilized tools for many systems and perhaps the employee performance evaluation is another area where it can be fully exploited. Hence, every international Human resources professional and department can use this research to get an idea from it. Therefore, this thesis topic has many international elements into it.

1.5 Benefits

Various stakeholders will benefit from this research, namely the human resources professionals, HR departments, employees, managers and businesses in general.

Every human resources department and hr professional will benefit from the research as it provides comprehensive and better understanding of the importance of mobile applications during the employee performance appraisal processes. It has always been challenging for HR professionals to effectively control the whole activity of reviewing employee performances. Since technology has advanced, there are far better opportunity to address and minimize the adversity of handling performance evaluations, perhaps, with the help of

software systems and finally the proliferation of mobile applications which are easy and user-friendly.

These apps are also at arm's length these days with majority of the society becoming more and more smartphone users and have these gadgets on their possession, this allows management and subordinates to interact with ease and provide simplicity and real-time feedback.

Companies: employee performance evaluation has always been a constant problem for firms regardless of the vast attempts made to tackle this issue, there is still a long way to go at least as companies concerned. Albeit, there has been some progress recently, perhaps, the use of technology made this possible. My topic will shed light on how businesses can exploit the benefits of new technologies and trends to eradicate the evaluation tension.

Managers: as author have mentioned above, managers will also benefit from this research to finally grasp where the real problem is and how to address it. When they use the mobile app tool and constantly interact with subordinates management will be able to increase individual performances and get best out of all employees resulting more productivity.

Employees: employees and managers consider performance review as the most ridiculous and hated process when it comes around at the end of the year, this has been given for several reasons and the most recurring is the lack of comprehension and interaction on both parts, that is, appraisee and the appraiser. This research will show how an app system can solve this problem for both managers and subordinates.

On the other hand, the research will benefit me to grow as a professional person as I have had a great deal of interest in the subject during my specialization studies. This study will give me some valuable insight to understand the whole subject of employee performance appraisal in general and the projected benefits of using mobile applications in particular. The research will open up my knowledge toward the background, main challenges, advantages and more importantly the way the whole system functions in an organisation.

1.6 Key Concepts

Performance management is defined as a holistic process that monitors employees' performance contributions to the overall business goals. This comprises many elements of

good people management practices, such as learning and development, measurement of performance, and organizational development. (Cipd 2015.)

Mobile applications are software applications that are specially developed to be used on small and wireless devices, for instance, smartphones and tablets rather than the conventional desktop computers and laptops. (GCF LearnFree 2016.)

Performance appraisal is the process of evaluating worker's current and/or previous performances in relation to particular pre-set performance standards (Dessler 1999, 190).

1.7 Research structure

The structure of this research contains five different sections that address different aspects of the research, the first chapter introduces the purpose of the research, the research problem followed by the scope and finally key concepts.

After the introduction the next chapter highlights the theoretical framework of the paper and the relevant data to comprehensively answer the research question.

In chapter three the author talks about the methods used during the research process and gathering of the data. Whereas, the subsequent chapters are results analysis and discussing findings, the author elaborates the outcome to prepare the presentation of reliable findings and present thoughtful recommendations and conclusion. Each chapter of the research is illustrated and detailed in the below figure.

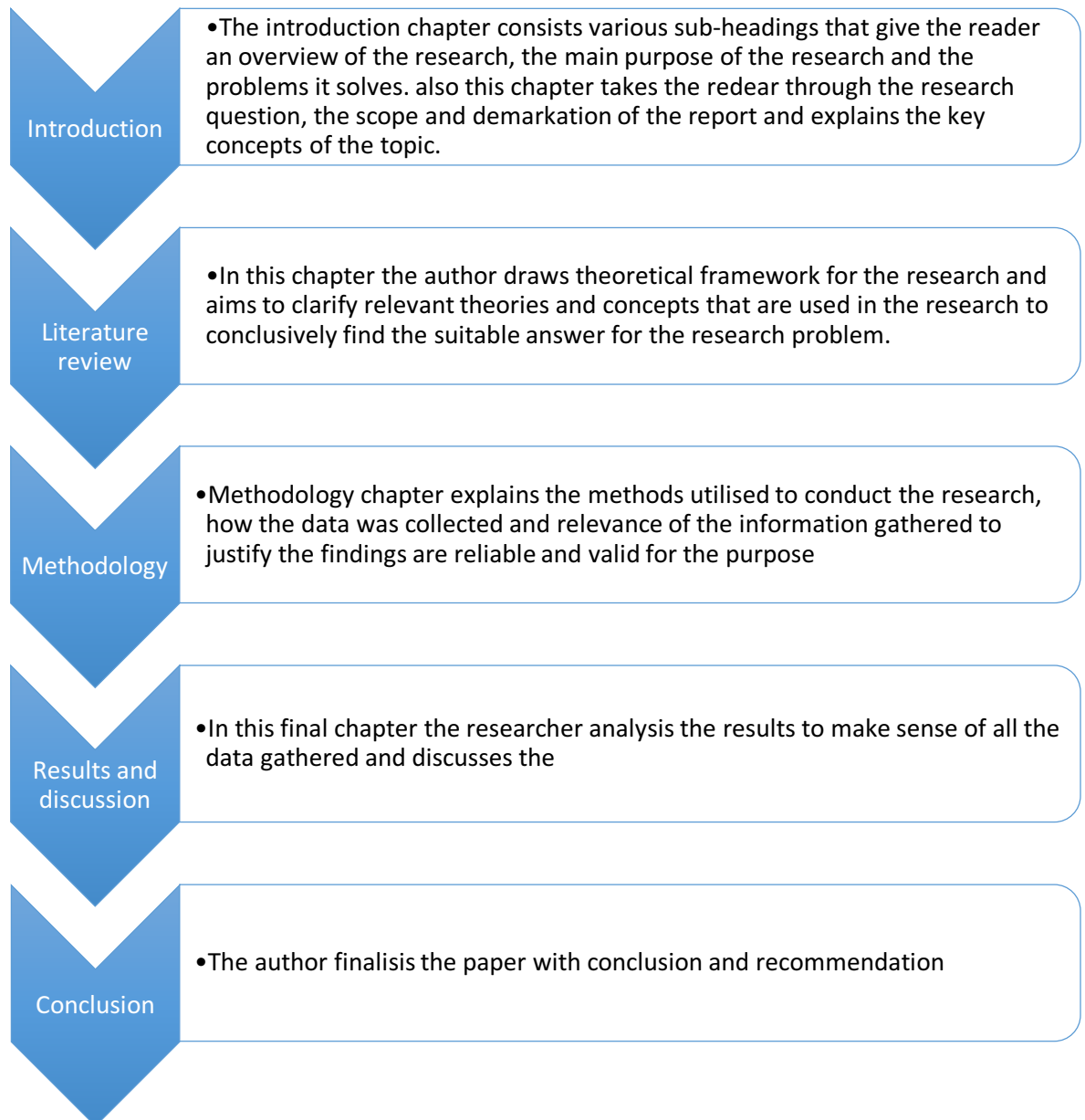


Figure 1: Research structure

2 Performance appraisal

This chapter will review the performance appraisal literature for the research to build the theoretical framework and provide an answer to the research question and for the desired objectives. The chapter will start with brief history of performance appraisal and how it has developed and evolved throughout the years, followed with definition of the concept and perhaps the main objective of having employee appraisal system in place.

The chapter will also glance the challenges of current review systems based on the available literature and previous researches. Then, the research will look at possible new directions for appraisal programs considering the technological advances and demand from today's workforce.

Furthermore, the research will further examine the possible effect that the usage of mobile application might have on employee performance reviews and the reasons behind its importance for HR departments to implement own mobile app for appraising.

2.1 Defining Performance appraisal

As explained by (CIPD 2015) performance appraisal is a process that consist the discussion between subordinates and their managers, typically line managers in order to review how each and every employee is performing against the pre-set standards and targets. Another element into these discussions is to ponder any future developments needed for employees as well as the potential support they might require in respective roles. Performance appraisals are usually aimed to obtain reflection of current or recent performances and put greater emphasis of organisation's future goals.

There is distinction between performance appraisal and performance management which is often mistakenly mixed up by people. However, performance appraisal is not performance management but an essential component of bigger performance management system and not in itself a performance management, in fact, the process is one of an array of tools which is used for performance management.

In terms of main differences between the two systems, for instance, performance management is a strategic tool which is used to control and align many aspects of the company such as long term goals and linking business and people management mechanisms. Contrary to PA the system is more broad and holistic that bring many activities together which contributes to the efficiency of the business and workforce and to the overall performance of the firm collectively.

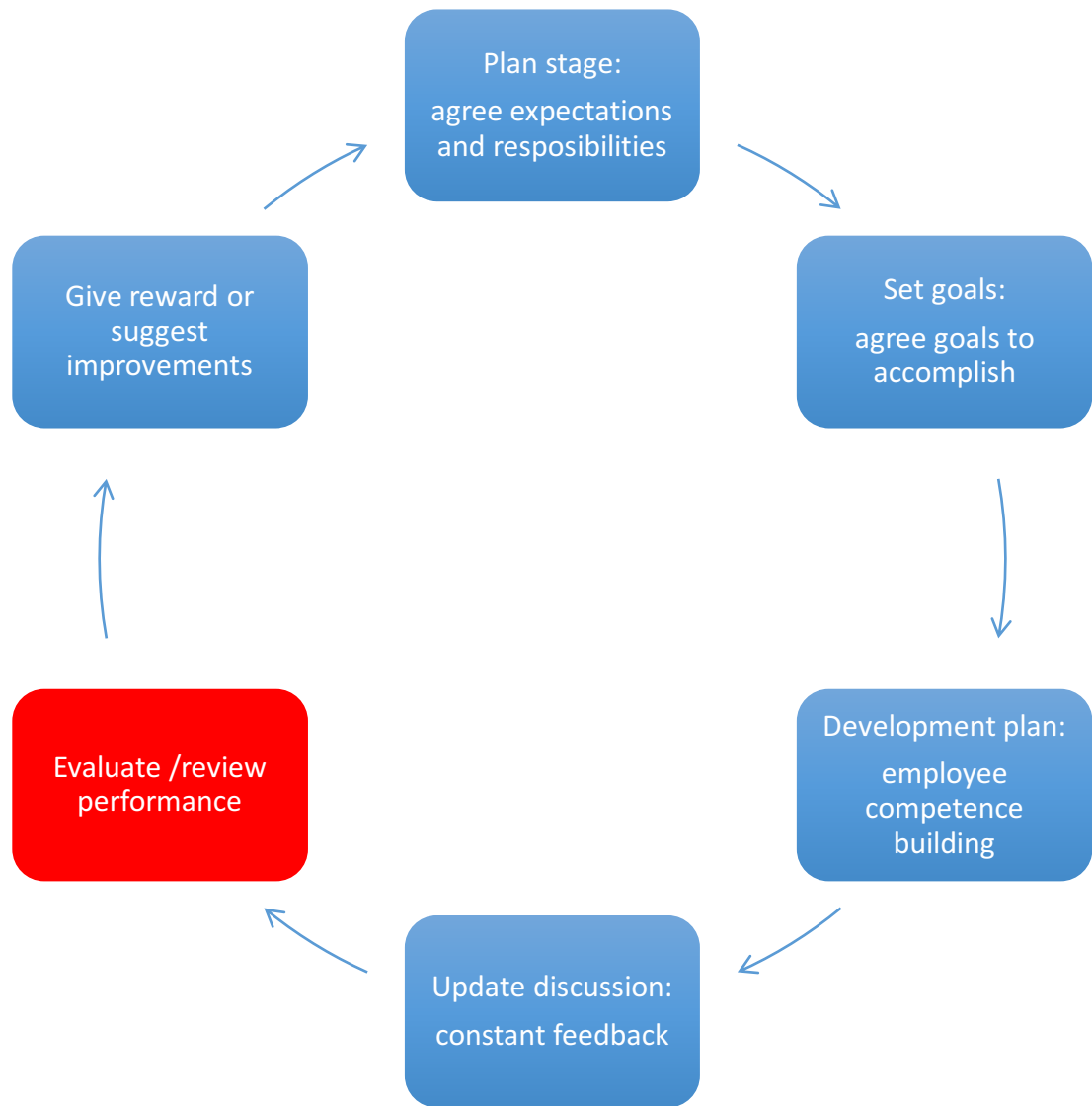


Figure 2: PM process cycle. (Walton 1999, 200)

Whereas PA is only a chunk of that bigger system which is used to monitor and manage worker's performances across the organization to make sure everyone is fulfilling the objectives in accordance to the pre-agreed standards. (CIPD 2015.)

Comparing PM and PA

Performance management and performance appraisals are two different methods which understandably are mistaken each other, their close affiliations prompting many people to interchangeably use the two terms. As mentioned at the previous paragraphs PM is a more comprehensive and continuous methodology when managing businesses. On the other hand, PA is an authoritative technique where managers and supervisors impose regulations and guidelines for subordinates to execute accordingly. (Armstrong 2006, 499-500.) However, both concepts are already explained in great detail and the following table only illustrates some main differences between the two.

Table 1: Comparison between PM and PA (Extracted from Armstrong and Dessler theories)

Performance management	Performance appraisal
Strategic tool for longer term objectives	Operational process that Focus more to short term aims
Focuses on future aspects a Forward-driven mechanism and overall growth of employees	Examine past and present performances, misconducts and shortcomings Retrospective
Continuous process	Periodic or occasional through the year
Process	System
Integrated and Holistic process	Isolated and specific for business requirements
Flexible, agile and adaptable with discussed agreement with employees and management	Strict and rigid system with command management style
Practical and efficient	Shallow system with too much Bureaucracy and control
Emphasise on qualitative measures of performances	Quantitative aspects driven
Contributes to total rewards decisions	Influences financial rewards
The process is owned managers	Owned by HR departments

Performance management and performance appraisals are different but for many people it proves to be challenging to easily distinguish, since the differentiation entails from goal setting, evaluating performance, developing skills and competences. However, the main differences are in the scope, for instance, PA is occasional and episodic assessment of employee's performance whereas PM is integrated and continuous process that aims to manage performances. (Brighthub 2012.)

The below diagram shows essential performance appraisal cycle stages:

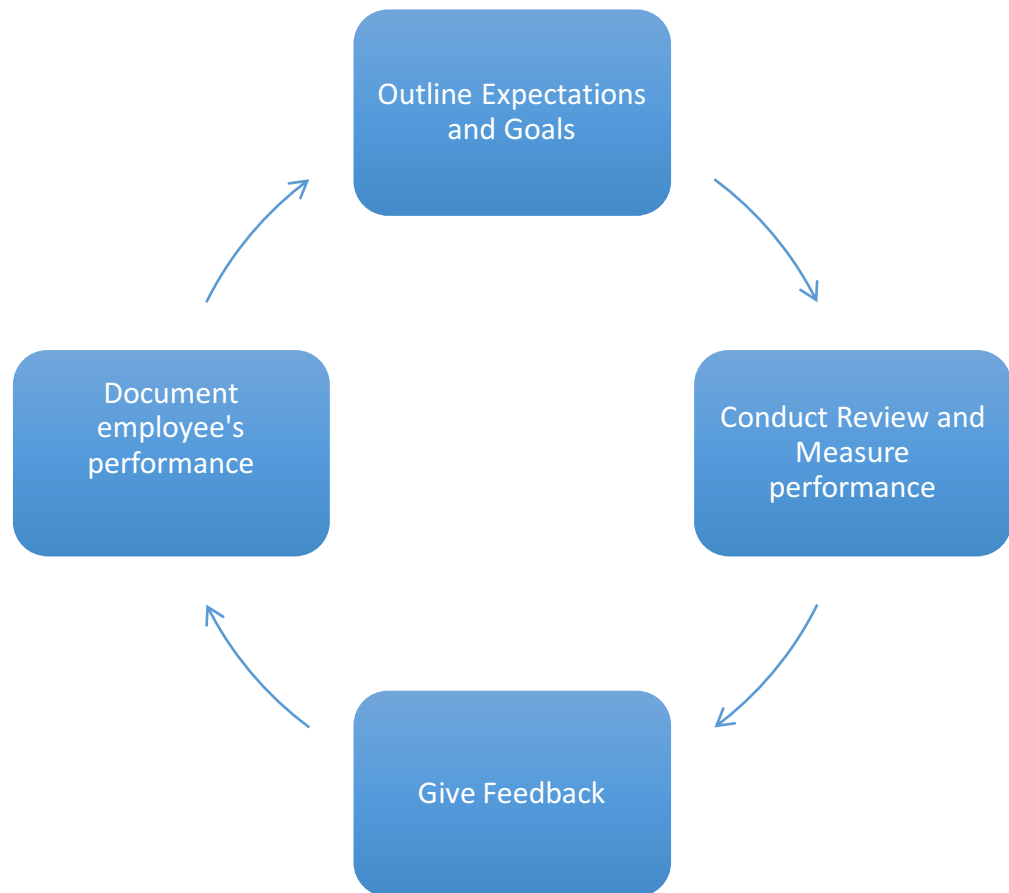


Figure 3: Basic performance appraisal components

2.1.1 Brief history

The historical background of Institutionalising employee performance appraisal is somehow brief, but the way organisations practice the system has transformed over time. PA has been in use from early stages of last century as a measurement tool that monitors and evaluates the efficiency of companies, the origin of the concept dates back to the era of industrial transformations. (Fandray 2001, 36-40.)

Looking at a broader perspective, the process of evaluating work performances is an ancient art that can be concluded as the oldest techniques used to measure and enhance organizational outcomes. (Performance-appraisal 2015.) However, the immediate historical background of employee appraisal itself is not very old and essentially has its roots to the early part of the last century with direct links and traces to the business efficiency technique, such as time and motion study pioneered by Frederick Winslow Tylor which is the father of scientific management theory that produces and evaluates workflows. A man whose discoveries of economic related studies were frequently referenced in researches. (Halsall, 1998.)

Mostly, the popularity and frequent usage of this process as a prominent procedure and as a formal management evaluation tool has significantly evolved from the period of the World War2 and thereafter, embarking the proliferation use of the concept and subsequently drawing major attention from scholars and academics to further theorize and conduct comprehensive study in the field.

2.1.2 Definition of performance appraisal

In order to define performance appraisals, first its essential to understand the actual meaning of the concept, there are various close synonyms that are quite interchangeably used with performance appraisal in different occasions. These synonyms are; performance evaluation, performance review. In general, these terms have exactly the same meaning even though different organizations use the different terms for the review process but ultimately convey the same message which is discussing with employees regarding their contribution toward work tasks. Companies might use the wording of Annual evaluation, employee review, annual performance review etc. to conduct the annual appraisals. (performance-appraisals 2015.)

Dessler (2011) explains that over time, performance appraisals have had several varying definitions and these are occasionally referred as; firstly, an instrument that is used to assess employee's performance against set standards of their tasks whereas other times the term is defined as the process of sitting down with employee and interviewing them to assess their performances and at the end of the interview providing feedback to the worker.

Another definition which this terms had been associated to is worded as a system that sets standards and expectations desired from employees to adhere to in their job, and after setting goals employees are subjected to measurement and assessment in order to see how they fared and like the other definition end the assessment by giving feedback to the workers shedding light on possible areas that need improvements and perhaps setting new targets for future tasks.

It is at this point in the process where managers are expected to either promote and discuss salary increase for employees or demote and set further tasks and expectations for the employee. This is the preferred model of modern day performance appraisal as it comprises various elements that are compulsory for effectiveness of the process.

Furthermore, performance appraisal is described as being a small part of bigger and integrated system of performance management. This is flowed by another recent definition which states that performance appraisal is an integrated organizational performance management with vertical and horizontal loadings, strategic plans, individual goals and metrics. (McGrath 2010, 17-19.)

Dessler (2009) in his book A framework for human resource management, has extensively written a well detailed chapter of performance management and employee performance appraisals where he has defined the concept as; methods of measuring the performance level of a worker in comparison with past performances and projecting it to their current performance in relation to the set goals and standards.

It become quite natural when one thinks about employee performance evaluations or reviews, it normally brings to mind some particular tools and forms that's been regularly used for appraising which are part of the whole process. Another aspect of the concept of evaluation is that it is also normal to assume there are certain standards and expectations agreed beforehand so that employees can endeavour in achieving them accordingly and at the same time indicates that there will be some sort of evaluation feedback provided to workers.

On the other hand, this is where employees also expect few decisions that reflect on their performance levels and it is here where managers give incentives and salary increase decisions for those performed excellently, demote or lay off under-performers and in some cases prompting them to undergo various career development and betterment programs, in order to enhance and bolster their skills and knowledge for the future.

2.1.3 Objectives of performance appraisal

Performance appraisals like any other process and techniques have main objectives which they target or expect to acquire, many different scholars and academics have written a lot about the main goals of performance appraisal systems that are widely in use across the world.

In the above sub-heading the performance appraisal is defined as a method or technique which is utilised to assess employee's performances against pre-set standards and target. Which involves several important processes of obtaining the details of individual performance levels and then analysing them to form a conclusive decision on maximising their potential in the organisation productively.

The objectives of performance appraisals stipulate from these very definitions aforementioned in the previous texts, and clearly illustrate the exact elements that shape the whole concept.

The main goal of appraising is to assess, measure and improve the current and past performances of sub-ordinates, based on these assessments managers are able to increase the potential of employees to the company and to determine their worth. (MSG, 2016.) It is of great mistake to narrow the objectives of appraising into few words because that will not be accurate, the subject of performance appraising can have so many differing objectives that can be obtained or reached. Its sometimes evident that some professionals summarise and tailor the objectives against their demand and requirements. However, on an extended version of the PA objectives they include:

- Performance appraisals can be conducted with the aim of maintaining individual performance records so that management can conclude the accurate decision about rewards, compensations and wage structures.
- PA aids managers to select the right people for the right positions; this goals are significant for the success of the company and productivity in general, this is done by emphasising on the weaknesses and strengths of employees.
- The other important purposes of PA are the assessment of potential for future growth for both company and the individual, the feedback is a major point which is used to interact with sub-ordinates and give direct reflection on their status. Through this process the employee will know how they fared in the last 12 months and how to improve on their low points, while managers gain excellent and valuable insight in to the employee's mind and find out whether their expectations are clearly conveyed. (MSG. 2016.)

Whatishumanresource (2015) a website with rich data of Human resource management lists various other aims that are obtainable from PA system adoption, the site illustrates each objective beautifully even though some of the objectives overlap with what has been explained already in the previous paragraphs and sub-headings which for that reason will not be inserted in the text again. Nevertheless, the remaining objectives are somewhat distinctive and therefore should appear in the research to some extent.

Encouraging improvement:

Organizations give great emphasis on improving every aspect of the company, be it the systems and tools utilised to reach goals or improving their human capital. To execute this practice firms must first know how individual performances are and its only then they can take improvement measures and designing effective performance reviewing system would pinpoint which areas need strengthening or improvement.

Inspire higher performance:

Performance appraising works as a perfect motivation tool to inspire employees in aiming for greater performances, this is done by making employees aware of the expected standards of the organisation which in turn drives the worker in reaching that expected level to gain recognition as high performer. No employee wants to be seen or labelled as bad apple in the workplace, therefore, the process of reviewing and evaluating individual's contribution throughout gives them an opportunity to work harder to impress when the discussions come around.

Setting and measuring goals:

Organisations have been using the technique of setting targets that are demanded to be reached, everyone involved is given the task of achieving these pre-set targets at given point, this is regularly used as a management process to generate top-notch performance. Setting effective goals should contain some elements that are crucial for its success, they must be Smart goals that are specific and clearly indicate their desired outcomes, also goals should be measurable that can give an answer to the means of accomplishing and that they are relevant to what the company expects to reach. (Dessler 2009, 194.)

Counselling poor performers:

It's very common that all workers do not perform perfectly to meet company standards for various reasons whether it's personal issues hanging over their heads or problems at the workplace such as workload, dissatisfaction of any kind etc. when these things happen it's natural people underperform and managers use performance appraisal as a tool to control the situation and solve matters so that everybody meets company expectations.

Encourage Coaching and Mentoring:

To have someone who has the knowledge and experience to guide you through the career stages especially at the early part where everything is uncertain is suggested to be a very significant. (Dessler 2009, 211.) To be successful at work, managers are firmly expected to act as mentors and great coaches and use performance appraisal to identify which areas are necessary for coaching.

Talent planning and hiring decisions:

Performance appraisal have a tremendous effect on many aspects of the workplace and those operating in them, companies with well drilled management systems have the tendency of continuously assessing the type of talents they have in possession and whether these are the right people for the future of the firm.

This process begins at the very point of assessing the talent acquisition plan where management needs to decide what kind of talent they require and where to boost in terms of departmental frailties i.e. departments that are deprived of top talents and those are rich in them taking drastic measures to equally balance out all divisions and ensuring the availability of excellent intellectual horsepower in the future.

Determine organization and personal development:

The appraising process also works on development of both fronts such the development of individuals working in the organisation to first provide great contributions to the growth and productivity of the company while increasing their possibility of securing promotions along the ranks and diminishing the chances of demotion or firing.

Likewise, the organisation also benefits from the process to determine which department, division or personnel that require further training or development and concentrate in that area rather than wasting resources and efforts into areas that are stable and satisfied.

Once companies have evaluated the performance of their employees its commonly understood there are subsequent steps that highlight career-related issues through career management process which enables employee to enhance and understand their career skills, knowledge and motivations. (Dessler 2009, 210.)

Legal defensibility of decisions:

This is a major area of contention and dreaded for any HR professional and manager that's conducting or preparing employee evaluation sessions because it raises too many red flags and creates tension between the appraiser and those subjected to appraising. These issues originate from where the manager is inept and unprofessional or biased, for instance, every decision made by management can be subjected to legal tangling and may end up in court possibly costing the company some fortune if they are found liable.

Dessler (2009) explains the possible decisions that might arise from disputes along the procedure consist but not the only ones:

Contract termination especially when this is determined right after the appraisal interview or discussion, the promotion denial cases where employees may mount a case of unjust or gross misconduct in the process. For the company its important that they can demonstrate their decisions were not influenced by discrimination such as race, religion, disability and sex orientation etc.

Overall Company performance

The ultimate goal, whatever steps might organisations take the final aim is to gain stability and steadiness and this is projected as the overall organisational performance satisfaction level were each department and division meets pre-set targets as expected and with pride. Using performance appraisal systems Companies are able to put their message across to the workforce, orchestrating organisational expectations and assessing them constantly so that every person works toward fulfilling the desired performance. Having over-performing teams and departments that regularly meets expectations only suggests an overall success of the organisation and that is another important objective of having employee performance appraisal. (whatishumanresource, 2015.)

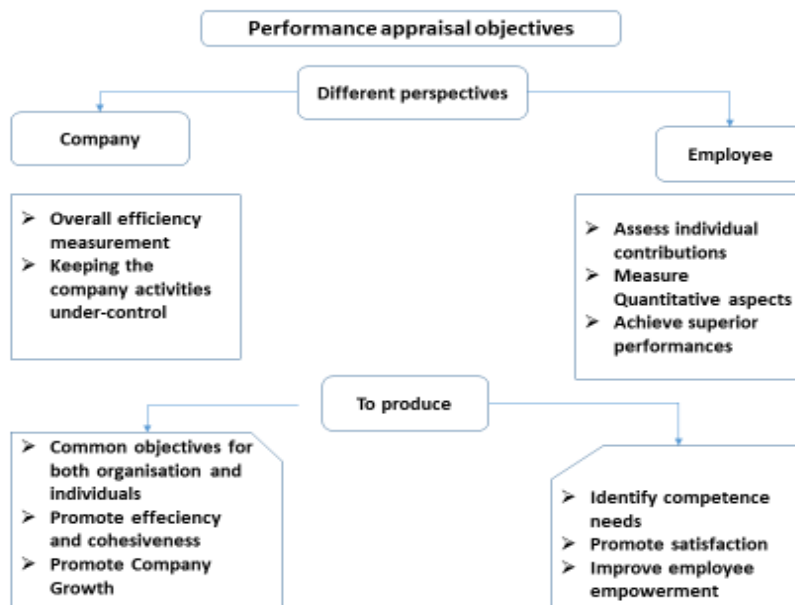


Figure 4: A typical objectives of PA

There are distinctive objectives of PA in any organisation Figure: explains these objectives on both prospective i.e. organisations' goals from the system and what sort of result they should yield in terms of economic growth, reputation, talent attraction and retention. Likewise, employee's expectations are clearly major factors in PA since each worker has own goals to endeavour toward these are promotions, salary upgrades, personal developments and overall job satisfaction.

2.1.4 Challenges of current systems

Like any other system performance appraisal has own problems and issues along the way, the PA processes are undermined by numerous chronic issues (Dessler 2009, 207.) They are criticised in various areas, fortunately most of these problems can be dealt with or solved. Some studies suggest a long and comprehensive list of issues in a well detailed fashion which performance appraisal professionals encounter.

The list is long and overwhelming to say the least, however, these problems can be compacted in to the following smaller categories (Kondrasuk 2011, 58-65.)

1. Problems related to **The PA Purposes**
2. The issues related to the **Participants**
3. Those related to **type of measures**
4. Issues linked **to the Processes.**

Before going into further detail of these categories we might as well glance at some common and basic problems that frequently occur. Dessler (2009) produced few points which he quite perfectly illustrated and summarised in his book.

Unclear Standards:

The author argues unclear standards which means where there is not clear cut boundaries for the terms used and it may result in an unfair appraisal outcome, he considers this as a gross problem for appraising. This finding can be contested or challenged because it does not represent all methods used in the appraising process, its clearly for the rating scale method and can't be generally accurate for the whole process.

Biases of appraisal system:

When as a worker you are aware of the impact appraisals can have on your career advancement and career development, salaries, job satisfaction and above all your livelihood that's your job its always much more difficult to contemplate the possibility of facing unfair and biased evaluation. (Dessler 2008, 229.) For many related reasons to this matter, employees dread performance review since managers do not usually assess individuals on objective criteria. (Roberts & Pregitze 2007, 16.)

Performance appraisal bias is by far the most difficult aspect during the evaluation process. In broad definition appraisal bias is a prejudice in favour of someone or something against another. (Hrbartender 2013.) However, in the context of employee performance review processes bias specifically refers to the insertion of distortion and inaccurate measurements against worker's performances, it is common that managers make these grave mistakes of misjudgement, favouritism and partiality toward specific individuals. Also they commit all sorts of other bias related issues that include:

Halo effect: this is a huge and yet practiced mistake by appraisers its where employee's performance is unfairly judged on the bases of one good trait or performance on particular area and hence imply this individual will automatically excel in terms of all round performances and rate them high or low in the evaluation which is completely perception driven rather than factual measurements. (Dessler 2008, 207.)

Horn effect: an employee might have some issues here and there or maybe they tend to have a behaviour of some sort, to base their overall rating on isolated trait is an unforgiving blunder which can result unhealthy workplace and dashes the employee morale. (MSG 2014.)

Leniency or strictness/ toughness quite often it occurs that appraiser projects his/her mood of the moment they performing the evaluation, whether the appraiser is tired, happy, furious from other factors or even having certain standards and values they preserve and decide to superficially rate individuals and be more lenient by giving fairly high marks to everyone. Whereas on the other hand, the appraiser might be assertive and strictly evaluate employee's performance which ca be tough. You simply can not have such too lenient system where everybody gets either high or low rating as it makes the process ineffective. Therefore, failing to achieve the purpose of the whole system i.e. distinguishing underperformers from top notch performing workers. (MSG 2014.)

Central tendency this is a classic example of smoothing things to tick over peacefully, how often people try to appease and avoid to create hostility and thus play it safe by giving steady and average number that will prompt everyone accept it. Again the evaluation objective is compromised as this method does not scrutinize how each individual fared or performed. (Dessler 2008, 208.)

Personal bias being a human means that everyone has preferences and inclinations toward particular things, be it other persons or objects. Managers and supervisors tend to have this characteristic and like and dislike some of their subordinates just because they don't go along together or maybe based on their looks, gender, sexual orientation, viewpoints or even from peer accounts. Therefore, personal bias comes into play when they are performing employee ratings.

Recent effect the assessment is driven from recent performances and activities of the appraisee instead of conducting holistic and comprehensive review of the whole period. (MSG 2014.)

Communication problems

According to Roberts & Pregitz (2007, 15-17) Inadequate communication during appraisal processes are common problems that inherently weaken the expected outcome of the process. Given the demanding nature and challenging priorities managers tend to lack the mental state and knowledge to give appropriate and candid evaluation to employees oftentimes appraisers might arbitrarily rate individuals with surprising assessments which leads employees to feel dissatisfied and sceptical with the whole process.

This completely contradicts the main purpose and goal of the appraisal system in motivating and increasing individual contribution to the overall production. Communication problems in any context are recipe for disaster, when this happens in employee performance reviews and appraisers fail to enclose proper and detailed grounds for possible poor ratings, clear cut evidence that convinces individuals the entire process collapses and frustrates the employee as this echoes the familiar unfairness and dreaded reality of contaminated workplace atmosphere.

2.1.5 Why Appraise

It's relatively important to understand where this idea of appraising employees comes from and why it has been given such huge interest and importance from academics and organisations alike. The performance appraisal concept has major impact on both organizational and individual efficiency, by using integrated process of setting objectives, developing worker's skills by providing further training and education and consequently evaluating and rewarding them. This in turn triggers a better productivity for the company.

Dessler (2009) has mentioned three main reasons for appraising employee's performances in the organisation which he described as the following:

Employee assessments give managers the platform and ability to make appropriate decisions on whose salaries and incentives are going to be increased and moreover who is an ideal candidate for possible promotion.

Furthermore, employee appraisals provide an opportunity for both managers and supervisors to sit down with subordinates and discuss about possible failures in previous targets and correcting them while managers use this as to rejuvenate and encourage those are performing on par. Basically meaning the process gives a chance to relook on what has been success and what has failed to materialise.

Another reason for appraising is that it can be used as a technique of developing workers professionally, every organisation should recognise their personnel as their best asset, they are what drives the success of the company. Appraising the employee's performance gives management an insight to the worker and through studying their strengths and weaknesses use this process as a career planning method, eventually aligning their needs with career plans that have been set previously.

In this following diagram iCIMS broadly detailed the main reason Organisations evaluate or appraise their workforce, there are variety of reasons to conduct employee performance appraisals whether its individual or departmental bases, often times there are even cross division aspects that contribute the demand for performance reviews to enhance and meet overall business practices and objectives. (iCIMS 2014.)



Figure 6: Appraisal reasons (iCIMS 2014)

2.1.6 New direction for performance appraisals

Considering the enormous issues and challenges mentioned there comes the actual reality of doing something about this plagued system which has long been flawed and drastically despised by employees.

Traditional performance evaluation systems are taking drastic shift towards newer and effective direction in the form of a coaching system which emphasises more to the achievement of measurable goals and objectives by the employee, instead of simply focusing on formalized annual judgement processes that are prone for failure as they are usually one dimensional in terms of communications.

The common performance appraisal systems that are widely used now consist either once a year or twice discussions that clearly do not effectively work to achieve their desired pur-

poses. The problem is that this type of annual appraisal method does more harm and disruption to employees and the entire workplace than improving anything or even at some occasions produce reverse effect of counterproductive repercussions. (BIA 2015.)

Continuous process.

Employee performance review system has been a very important tool for companies for long time, and its still proves to be an essential for organisational success where it measures and sets targets to maximise overall productivity of individuals. However, the system has been under constant criticism for not yielding the expected result and impact, this is because once in a year discussion is not effective and certainly does not work or produce any concrete outcome, hence paving the way for continuous and endless employee discussion and assessment throughout the year to tackle possible shortcomings.

A mentoring approach is thus needed to promote more interaction between management and their subordinate, this type of reviewing is the way forward for organisation in this day and age of vast changing business environment. Everything has to be on short-time bases, meaning continues feedback that takes place either weekly or monthly and drawing new targets, setting goals should be happening in this same sequences of within four weeks period to eradicate employee's underperforming tendencies and gaining far better results persistently. (talentmanagement 2014.)

Mentoring approach:

Rather than once-a-year ritual, performance appraisal should be happening on a continual basis which is more like a coaching or mentoring relationship between the manager/supervisor and the employee. It is the only way to implement performance management in a business world where change is both constant and rapid. In this kind of real-time feedback-rich approach to performance management, substantial check-ins would occur at least monthly, but weekly would be even better. Goalsetting should also occur on either a quarterly or monthly basis. Companies that do this are getting much better results from their PM systems than companies relying on the annual approach.

Flexible and Nimble:

Annual reviews problems are mainly attributed to the rigidity of the system and how it evolved into a very complex and dreadful experience for employees which they hate so much, employees hate the whole experience and its bureaucratic nature because the cur-

rent systems employ strings of complicated and mostly unsupportive steps such as completing host of forms, writing narratives and eventually the facing the dreadful rating which does not usually reflect on the real contribution of particular employee.

Therefore, more flexible and accommodating method of appraising is the new direction of future performance assessments, this methodology should be more interacting and collaborating with employees by planning future expectations and how to obtain them and discussing with the employee how the manager can provide the necessary assistance i.e. right tools, skills and competence to accomplish the desired objectives.

Empower the employee:

The beauty of this aspect of giving employees leading role in their responsibilities and allowing them to initiate is that it enhances the productivity of the employee. Research finds (talentmanagement360 2014) that this empowering step frees up more time and effort for managers to focus on the holistic picture and the fact that employees enjoy to be given such role to initiate and getting constant and unbiased feedback, workers are also motivated the prospect of receiving career development opportunities contrary to the despised and dreaded annual review process.

Through giving constructive feedback and making employees valuable to the organisation by giving them more flexibility, this process triggers them to use their strengths and capabilities whereas the management build on this bases for workers to blossom bearing in mind their weaknesses, the need for improvement and development. (talentmanagement 2014.)

2.2 The use of Mobile apps for appraising

App definition

The proliferation of the technology in general has prompted the Mobile technology to become an integral part of today's life which is amplified by consumer acceptance. In this day and age business and even individuals demand greater flexibility, availability of information on demand, speed of interaction, the need to access data whenever and anytime required, this urgency has accelerated more demand and rapid growth for mobile application usage and has dramatically increased the need for app in the industry to constantly interact with and empower employees. (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 8-13.)

In a broad definition, Mobile applications are downloadable software programs that can be directly accessed using smartphones or tablet computers (Onguardonline 2014). However, there are various definitions which are attributed to the concept.

Common definition of mobile application, which is mostly known or abbreviated as App, smartphone app, online app, web app is application software that is devised or developed to run on a portable device, such as tablet devices and smartphones. Usually Mobile applications are tiny and individual software components which have quite limited functionalities. These applications are designed to provide same services as conventional desktop computers. (Techopedia 2016.)

Mobile apps provide whole lot of technological advantages because the use of the app allow the user to easily access online materials, such as books, newspapers, maps, pretty much everything on the web. This flexibility and user friendly nature of the mobile app makes it popular with many people across the world, the fact that the system is convenient and simple to download the app and utilise it straight away.

2.2.1 The Early Use

Mobile apps are software programs that are rather new due to the proliferation of modern technology, the recent years have seen dramatic increase of popularity and widespread use of these apps throughout different sectors and industries including the human resources industry to enhance their performance and productivity. (Clark 2010.)

Since the introduction of world's first cell phone by Motorola which provided very basic functions such as making calls and simple contacts applications, the technology has evolved ever since and the birth of mobile applications exploded in the 90s as the first-generation mobile phones were developed.

All sorts of mobile applications started to emerge in quick succession and Nokia has introduced first of these kind when they created applications for games, calculators, calendar, clock etc. this embarked the demand of mobile phone usage and gave complete new direction and understanding on the gadget, people learnt more about the properties and functionalities of the device and wanted even more thus encouraging manufacturers to explore and develop further.

Today's smartphone apps are attributed to IBM Simon who has introduced the Psion EPOC or EPOC operating system as the world's first mobile app specifically for PDAs (Rajput 2015.) Further research and development paved the way for the introduction of

first smartphone by BlackBerry in 2002 which was seen as a giant leap and opened flood-gate for mobile application development. However, using mobile apps for employee performance assessment is fairly new phenomena and its in early infancy stages, few companies such as GE, IBM, Deloitte have started to take notice for the importance of the concept and are still trying to make sense of what kind of impact it might have to contribute to the individual performance.

Generally, using mobile app in employee performance appraisal is still in the early stages and will take sometime to prove whether it meets the expectation or not, many HR professionals, organisations and academics are desperately trying to find solution for the performance review system and certainly would want mobile apps to be the long awaited solution.

2.2.2 Importance of Mobile apps in appraising

The use of mobile app in employee performance assessment bears huge benefits for both organisation and employees (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 22.) Likewise, the utilisation of the app system lifts tremendous weight off managers since they are under continuous challenge in maintaining employee productivity and getting highest possible performance from them. This is indeed difficult task to achieve, given the enormous adversity surrounding the employee's performance review such as differences and variations in cultures, behaviours, and diverse nature of workforce, which proves managing these diverse employees so difficult. Hence, mobile apps come in handy to eradicate:

Communication issues: communication problems are disastrous experiences for every organisation and comes with whole lot of issues and difficulties, it affects the stuff, the production, the reputation and image of the company. Businesses take this matter seriously and they should, because communication is the backbone and one the most important functions in any business. Mobile app usage improves the channel of communication available across the company and encourages stuff to share information across in a simple and easy manner.

Smooth interaction: Mobile apps boost real-time interaction which is an important factor when solving issues for employees, for instance, if the employee is having difficulty in performing their duties they simply need quick solutions and guidance from their superiors, the mobile app system provides this perfectly.

Bias is eliminated: as the author indicated in the previous chapters, rater or appraiser bias is the biggest problem that mostly causes the whole system to crumble or fail, since the new approach is not involved rating measures where the employee is given specific number that represent his or her performance level and thus determines their destiny in the organisation. Their status, financial rewards, promotion or even employability is decided upon these rating system which is controlled by that person whom can exercise gross misconduct and bias.

Even though there will still be face-to-face discussion between manager and subordinate at the end of the year to agree new targets and conclude the previous achievements, the exceptional and unique contribution of the employee throughout the year facilitates management to draw a much deeper and comprehensive data. Therefore, bias is eliminated or minimised in this method. (Hbr 2015.)

Feedback: organisations have the opportunity to capitalise on the mobile app and extract valuable feedback and reflection from employees to build on the current status of individual performances comparing it against the pre-set organisational standards. These can be collected in different ways that include various applications in the form of quick polls, filling in short forms and perhaps exploiting the rich integration of the popular social media platforms in order to generate comprehensive feedback. (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 19.)

Problems minimised: managers and supervisor encounter massive challenge to maintain healthy workplace where everyone is happy and contributing to achieve the organisational objectives and targets. Therefore, managers put huge chunk of their time, effort and resources to deal with various problems or hurdles along the way to fulfil this endeavour.

In an article published by Fortune500 indicates that the use of mobile applications will greatly benefit the employee performance review process in many ways (fortune 2015.) The most apparent and obvious benefit is that the app is a tool that allows management to be more incumbent coach that leads perfectly. Also the use of mobile applications in the appraisal process promotes supervisors and managers to change dramatically. (Nissen 2015.)

Lengthy elaboration on Harvard business review (Baldassarre & Finken 2015) explains today's organisations require effective team collaboration, employee empowerment, feedback and cross functional attitude to ensure that customers receive unparalleled service and thus enhance the overall growth of the company. This is indeed, one major benefit that using mobile apps in the appraisal procedures yields.

A very simple mobile application which is compatible with various features that facilitate users to share information and communicate efficiently and allows them to upload data, the most important features include text inputs, voice capabilities, file attachments, sketches, notepad photographs and hand written notes.

Information follow: one of the most important features of using mobile apps in performance appraisal is that it increases the level of communication between management and subordinates. The utilisation of mobile applications ensure that accurate information is exchanged throughout, while also using mobile app in the process stresses more on direct and constant interaction from both manager/supervisor and the employee which is somewhat difficult to be achieved in the old appraisal system. (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 22.)

2.2.3 The future of Performance Appraisals

The future of Performance appraisal is contentious and debatable, many organisations are contemplating to scrub it altogether while others are trying to reshape and make drastic changes, the process of reviewing employee's performance has long been viewed as flawed by business institutes, academics, HR professionals and managers. They have criticised the system as ineffective to yield meaningful results on individual's performance, they argue that the procedure does not directly contribute to increase output rather put more pressure and stress on employees forcing them to feel uncomfortable at work and in some situations render them compelled to extremely underperform.

The conventional evaluation system make the employee feel unwanted or not belonging to the organisation they work for, this is a direct contrast to every known motivational theory available which emphasise that the feeling of belonging is the key substance for highly motivated worker and thus prompting higher productivity as a result. (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 23.)

According to Bersin (2016) there will be a major overhaul in the HR industry in the near future, specifically the performance management systems and the feedback. There is no doubt about the fact that mobile applications will be the future of the performance appraisals. Not only performance management will experience the changes but also other areas in HR will go through tremendous transformation and innovation that include hiring processes, retention and on-boarding, engagement etc. In terms of the technological advancement and to take advantage of the modern technology, businesses in general will

benefit from this move as mobile apps are made simple, easy and user friendly platforms that provide rapid and dramatic improvement throughout the process.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

This research paper is a desktop study type thesis where the author reviewed and studied various literature sources for the subject to gather enough data and explore the subjects sufficiently. The objective of this thesis is to explore whether there is any importance of this topic for organisations and individuals alike.

As part of the research methods the author has conducted qualitative interview with various respondents from the HR industry, the interviewees have been chosen based on their expertise and specialty in the field. These human resources professionals were asked pre-set qualitative questions that address the research problem directly and answer the theses topic comprehensively.

The questions were aimed to obtain thorough answer for possible importance of Mobile app for appraisal processes and also to establish possible advantages such system might produce. Furthermore, these interviews shed light on the applicability of using mobile application for this purpose in various parts of the world where internet availability is limited or non-existent. The author pre-planned the questions put to the respective respondents to reflect on the desired outcome i.e. providing answers to the main research question and its sub-questions.

The research goes through various stages that include collection of data in both primary and secondary, the primary data has been collected by interviewing HR experts on face-to-face and via email to get an insightful information, respondents were asked pre-set semi-structured questions that was prepared in advance. the secondary data was gathered in the form of desktop study, reviewing available sources and materials regarding the employee performance appraisal and mobile applications, the typical materials studied for this research consist Books, Journals, internet materials; Websites and Articles.

The study used Mono-Method research, a qualitative strategy which is chosen for various reasons much to the fact that qualitative method enables the researcher to quickly comprehend the subject and particularly the research design issues such as the type of questions and how to collect required data. Another advantage of this technique is the flexibility to manoeuvre the direction of the research if new evidences emerge.

Moreover, since this method uses small samples its easier for the researcher to handle the costs incurred throughout the research period. Qualitative research is used to gain the ability to interpret non-numerical data in order to obtain valuable and meaningful findings, qualitative methods emphasize on attaining and analysing of attitudes experiences and behaviours. (Zikmund, 2010.)

The interviewees were asked these semi-structured questions in a face-to-face fashion, the researcher have chosen this type because this interview style is appropriate for studying the topic deeply and thus discovering best outcome for the purpose of the research. Semi-structured interviews are amongst the popular interview techniques that yield profound results, this interview method provides flexibility in the process and allows the researcher to extract valuable information from respondents. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 318-321.) Also, same questions were sent out to respondents and then analysed upon receiving them.

3.2 Research Design

The author has determined the research problem as a form of a question with few sub-questions to provide firm answer for the the subject. The main question is drawn as: How does the use of Mobile applications improve employee performance appraisal processes? Followed by another sub-question which was stated as: What are the advantages of utilizing mobile apps for employee performance appraisal?

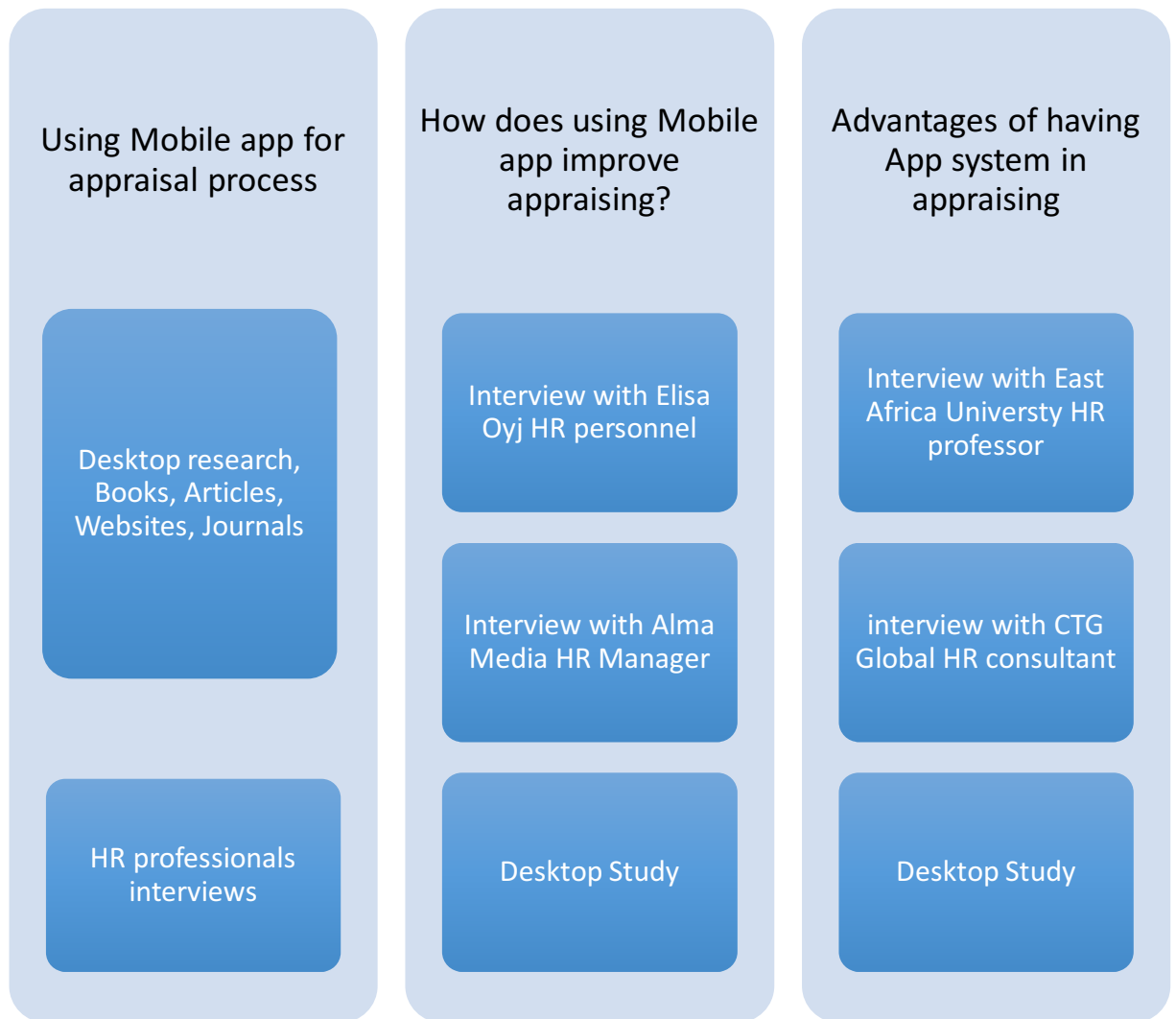


Figure 7: Research Design

3.3 Data collection

The main focus of the data collection process for this research is to reach a thorough and conclusive verdict for the research problem. Therefore, this requires tremendous effort to gather enormous data from different sources whether its secondary or primary data, consult various and diverse sources to justify the answer for the research question argument. However, relying solely on secondary data for such complex subject renders the outcome somewhat inconclusive or lacking valuable insight from primary perspectives.

To preserve the validity and the quality of the findings the author conducts qualitative interview with several academics and Hr professionals which enhances the overall result of the research.

3.3.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data is described as any material that is been written by organisations, individuals, academics and professionals which are in the form of Books, Journals, articles that's been already prepared in the past. (Thornhill, Saunders & Lewis 2009, 256-260.) The secondary data used in this research includes variety of latest performance management and performance appraisal Books, different Articles about the topic which is written in various publications and websites, Journals and reports of highest quality.

The author used educational materials from reputable HR educators such CIPD and other organisations that provide HR related courses, these considerable data is gathered to maintain the quality of the sources used in the research and therefore build a strong foundation for the quality of the research.

3.3.2 Primary Data

The primary data used in the research consists several first hand interviews which is conducted with some HR experts, the author collected interviews in the form of pre-set semi-structured questions through email with both Elisa Corporate HR executive vice president Merja Ranta-aho and with Alma Media's Human Resources manager Heini Heikkila. Also there are three other respondents which the author interviewed for this paper to gather more in-depth data to answer the research problem more thoroughly. The interviews were mixture of face-to-face, over the email and via skype. For instance, the Human resources consultant of CTG Global a Human resources consulting firm that operates across the world, the author conducted a face-to-face interview which gave some valuable information.

The selection of respondents was based on two different perspectives for the interviews to provide the desired answers for the type of questions directed at different regions and areas in the world, in order to prove the applicability of mobile application usage for employee performance appraisals.

3.3.3 Alma Media and Elisa Oy Interview Questions

The author has conducted first two interviews through email on 12 March 2016. with Merja Ranta-aho an HR executive vice president of Elisa Oy and Heini Heikkila who is a HR Manager at Alma Media, these are both Finnish companies based in Helsinki where pre-set questions were sent to the interviewees. the respondents answered to the bellow questions which the author analysed afterwards.

1. How would you describe an effective employee performance review system and what are its main components/ objectives?
2. What are the core criteria for employee performance assessment?
3. How can appraisal system be used as a tool in order to motivate and shape employee's career development?
4. It's widely understood performance reviews are problematic and people hate them, what are the main reasons for this?
5. Have you experienced or encountered such problems?
6. In general, why performance appraisal procedures fail?
7. Performance appraisals have been facing huge criticism in the past, some researchers pointed out lack of effective interaction between managers and subordinates as the cause, how do you think if companies exploited mobile app technology would solve the problem?
8. Many major corporations such as GE, Accenture, Deloitte have lately decided to scrap annual review systems and some of them specifically adopt mobile app systems for appraising, do you see this trend as the future of appraising employee performances?
9. How important is an app system to improve efficiency of review processes?
10. What would you expect to achieve from using the mobile app in the performance appraisal process?

3.3.4 CTG global interview version

The second set of the interviews have been conducted in 10 May 2016. This interview has been arranged in a face-to-face manner with the respondent, the respondent Isaac Mkunda of CTG Global. The purpose and the type of questions asked this respondent where mainly aimed to prove the applicability of using Mobile app system for appraising in Africa where the internet facilities are very scarce. Following are the questions asked in the interview:

1. How would you describe an effective employee performance review system and what are its main components/ objectives?
2. In general, why performance appraisal procedures fail?
3. Performance appraisals have been facing huge criticism in the past, some researchers pointed out lack of effective interaction between managers and subordinates as the cause, how do you think if companies exploited mobile app technology would solve the problem?

4. Many major corporations such as GE, Accenture, Deloitte have lately decided to scrap annual review systems and some of them specifically adopt mobile app systems for appraising, do you see this trend as the future of appraising employee performances?
5. How important is an app system to improve efficiency of review processes?
6. What would you expect to achieve from using the mobile app in the performance appraisal process?
7. Mobile app technology and internet facility are almost made for each other; we know this is big problem for the whole continent, how do you see the applicability of Mobile app systems?
8. Using Mobile app for appraising require sufficient internet access in terms of data load and being able to be active all the time to interact, how would you deal with this issue?

3.3.5 East Africa University interview

Finally, the author has conducted last interview with HR professor at East Africa University on 24 May 2016.

Like the previous interviewee the respondent Mohamed Abdullahi of East Africa University was asked pre-set questions on face-to-face method, the purpose and the type of questions asked this respondent where mainly aimed to prove the applicability of using Mobile app system for appraising in developing countries, particularly African countries where the internet facilities are very inadequate or limited. Following are the set of questions asked in the interview:

1. How would you describe an effective employee performance review system and what are its main components/ objectives?
2. In general, why performance appraisal procedures fail?
3. Performance appraisals have been facing huge criticism in the past, some researchers pointed out lack of effective interaction between managers and subordinates as the cause, how do you think if companies exploited mobile app technology would solve the problem?
4. Many major corporations such as GE, Accenture, Deloitte have lately decided to scrap annual review systems and some of them specifically adopt mobile app systems for appraising, do you see this trend as the future of appraising employee performances?
5. How important is a mobile app system to improve efficiency of review processes?
6. What would you expect to achieve from using the mobile app in the employee performance appraisal process?

7. Mobile app technology and internet facility are almost made for each other; we know this is big problem for the whole continent, how do you see the applicability of Mobile app systems?
8. Using Mobile app for appraising require sufficient internet access in terms of data load and being able to be active all the time to interact, how would you deal with this issue?

3.4 Validity and Reliability

From the planning stages and through to the subsequent phases research quality has been of utmost importance for the researcher, thus, choosing the most popular and well recognised experts in the fields of performance management in general and performance appraisals in particular and the field on Mobile application phenomena. All the theoretical perspectives were sketched around the best and most reliable sources available, the people used in the report are hugely respected experts in the industry such as Mr Gary Dessler and Armstrong with whom the author referred greatly as sources in the research.

The qualitative interview respondents were carefully selected given their calibre and status in the HR profession, namely Merja Ranta-aho an HR executive for major corporation and Heikkila Heini an HR manager for Alma Media company, a company that provides Media and Services which specifically specializes with digital media and publications. Not only focus on media but they also have other products in their ranges such as business development, career and lifestyle related products. Alma Media operates in all Nordic countries and several other countries in the continent.

For the overseas perspective, respondents from different backgrounds such as educational institutions and field work backgrounds were interviewed, these include an HR consultant from CTG Global which is a Human resources consulting firm working globally and expertise to train personnel for many organisations across the world but with greater focus on developing and third world countries. also a professor of East Africa University's human resources management (HRM) have been interviewed and has contributed very insightful information with each of these individuals boasting a formidable track record of expertise and insightfulness in this topic. Indeed, every respondent gives very reliable and highest quality insight information which enhances the overall quality of the research.

3.5 Analysis Method

Data analysis comprise certain steps that require the researcher to go through which starts studying the data and familiarizing the content of it, once that part is mastered the researcher must go through the data by classifying the appropriate, applicable, more suitable and fitting data in comparison to the unfitting or un-necessary information. Before interpreting the data gathered the process should involve the organising of the the information, the identification of the patterns and relations between them. (Powell & Renner 2003, 2-5.)

In this research paper the researcher categorised the data collected through desktop study and expert interviews and then analysed it in a manner that is fitting to generate an appropriate answer for the research question, the interview conducted with each individual are analysed appropriately.

4 Findings

The research has established that majority of HR leaders and line managers are unhappy with the way organisations conduct annual performance reviews, indicating that the procedure does not produce any useful result that would improve employee performance and overall business productivity.

For instance, HR experts interviewed in this research paper argue if employee performance appraisal process does not contain important elements that generate system effectiveness, the process will be bound for problems and might create tension atmosphere in workplaces. Ranta-aho explained this during the interview.

“Appraisal problems stipulate from lack of the following essential factors i.e. Giving helpful feedback and helps the employee to develop and improve, with a schedule relevant to the actual work rhythm. It should contain dialogical target setting, alignment of essential means to achieve targets, continuous performance follow-up and feedback and re-alignment of actions, performance evaluation, planning and follow-up of development in short and long term.” (Ranta-aho, M. 15 March 2016.)

If these factors are absent from the performance appraisal process it renders the whole experience troublesome and to some extent challenging to be fruitful for the organisation and management alike, as the interviewee pointed out every review system should reflect these components otherwise its doomed for failure.

Furthermore, human resources professionals vent their concern of the process to various reasons that comprise the fact the annual review systems are extremely time consuming task in nature, each year managers tend to spend around 210 hours to just execute performance appraisal activities or evaluating individual performances. Likewise, employees themselves endure this bureaucratic and rigid machine for both time wasting and intimidation, each employee wastes a whopping forty valuable hours per year. According to numerous studies on the subject, performance appraisal and individual ratings have as little impact on business results and do not precisely display actual employee contributions.

Additionally, not only that employee performance assessments fail to address the very basic aspects they are formed for but it also creates undesirable tension between management and subordinates, because majority of employees feel that one person, in this case the appraiser, is both the jury and the judge. This person has complete authority on their fate and decides who is going to be promoted, whose salary is raised and who is go-

ing to be fired. This prompts employees to take very defensive positions toward their managers, a dreadful prospect which jeopardises the potential overall productivity of the business. (shrm 2015.)

The research finds that Employee performance appraisal has long been seen as a problematic process for both individuals and for management, this is because it does not reflect or yield the desired outcome. Human resources Professionals and academics criticise the system for numerous reasons that comprise minor issues and some radical problems that are extremely difficult to deal with. The most challenging issues that jeopardise employee performance appraisals come from the person conducting the appraisal and they occur in different forms such as personal bias, lack of professionalism and competence in executing or conducting proper evaluation.

Performance appraisal bias is by far the most difficult aspect during the evaluation process, in other words, appraisal bias is defined as prejudice in favour of someone or something against another but in the context of employee performance assessment bias refers to the insertion of distortion and inaccurate measurements against worker's performances, it's common that managers make these grave mistakes of misjudgement, favouritism and partiality toward specific individuals. (Dessler 2011, 229.)

Other appraisal problems that hinder the effectiveness of the system are described as unclear standards which means the lack of defined or clear cut boundaries for the terms used in any particular assessment undertaken. This may result an unfair appraisal outcome, the study considers this as a gross problem for appraising systems. Even though there might be a legitimate and valid argument toward this finding which can be contested or challenged because it does not represent all methods used in the appraising procedure, it is particularly for the rating scale method and can not be accurate to be generalised for the whole process.

Often times, there are situations where organisations struggle to generate appropriate revenues and they might use annual performance reviews as a tool to curb individual promotions and bonuses which results demotivation, hatred and further division between employees and managers.

4.1 Using Mobile app improves Appraising

The majority of the interviewees that participated in this research paper have agreed the importance of using Mobile app for employee annual performance reviews. Even though,

they have somewhat struggled to conclude whether such application would solve all the problems incurred during the evaluation process, however, all respondents acknowledged the importance of such application for communication and real-time interaction between management and subordinates. After all, performance appraisal problems are not blanket issues for all companies. In fact, this depends on how each company sets up their review systems, what tools they utilise and indeed the competence and skills of the people conducting the evaluation.

At Elisa, where one of the interview respondents works at has no issues with their annual review processes.

“At Elisa, according to our personnel survey, most people find their performance reviews useful.” (Ranta-aho, M. 15 March 2016.)

This is attributed to the fact that Elisa HR department have solid and comprehensive performance appraisal system that gives helpful feedback, develops employee and provide training and the right tools for supervisors to conduct proper review. On the other hand, those organisations that do not embroil their appraisal processes with the above mentioned elements are those struggle to make sense of their annual evaluations.

Nevertheless, clearly there are countless advantages of using the mobile applications for performance review that include elimination of personal bias as there is no rating scale that give numbers to appraisee which determines their status with the company, provide smooth interaction and feedback between management and employees here both parts share real-time information to collaborate effectively.

“Usually everything has a negatives and positives, in broad sense the idea of using mobile app for appraising is positive, having constant interaction, providing continuous information sharing is great. Also the real-time correction to give guidance to workers and solving challenges when needed, the continuous communication, constant feedback. Indeed, with the proper use of this technology it will be better than the other system because you get the information and correctives on time.” (Abdallah, M. 24 May 2016.)

Also other benefits of implementing mobile app system for appraisal procedures include; enables line managers and supervisor to give coaching and mentoring initiatives. Above all, throughout the research and also from the expert contribution analysis it has been evi-

dent that the use of mobile app does in fact improve some problem areas or at least minimise the degree of the issues faced during appraisals, specifically the communication aspects as McWherther & Gowell (2012) explained in their book. But performance evaluations have much more problems than communication only as detailed in the challenges of performance appraisal chapter of this research. The process is deemed chaotic by human resources academics and professionals, with so many challenges mentioned in different researches and studies conducted on the field that hinder the potentially desired impact on employee appraisals.

While all these positive findings might sound interesting the idea of using mobile application for employee performance review to bring some sort of improvement has drawn several adversaries that oppose its direct contribution to enhance assessment system. The use of the mobile app phenomenon does not convincingly indicate where the benefits would be compared to desktop and laptop software that are already in the market and gaining momentum. Though, there might still be specific benefits in gamifying performance tracking during the day but the overall positive aspects outweigh the negatives. (Ranta-aho, M. 15 March 2016.)

The research indicates that performance appraisals hugely suffer from lack of instant or real-time communication issues between management and subordinates which deepens the severity of the problem. This is where mobile apps can play a very important role to provide smooth interaction and easy platform for constant feedback. (Abdallah, M. 24 May 2016.)

Provide many advantages of flexibility and easy access to online materials, such as books, newspapers, maps, pretty much everything on the web. This flexibility and user friendly nature of the mobile app makes it popular with many people across the world, the fact that the system is convenient and simple to download the app and utilise it straight away.

Proving the importance of using mobile app for employee performance appraisal processes seems difficult, but the argument will only trigger the demand for more in-depth analysis and further study in the topic. The most recurring theme during the course of this research which all respondents of the interviews and literature review materials pointed toward is that using mobile application in this procedure helps initiate unparalleled communication platform. This is in a sense a breakthrough step towards finding a permanent solution to this troublesome subject once and for all, but for now the issue appears to continue persisting.

4.2 Applicability issues of Mobile app for Performance appraising

The research finds that not only technical problems arise from the idea of using mobile application for performance assessment but there are some applicability concerns in some parts of the world, for instance, in developing countries and areas less fortunate with technology and internet availabilities indicate there is no possibility of implementing such application as it requires high-speed internet connection.

The biggest challenge for example in Africa, Asia, Latin America and various other regions or countries in the world is that the internet is insufficient, although there are some expectations for this to improve in the future as is the case in some parts of Africa where there are plans to install high speed internet systems which will result better internet connection services. It might seem promising future but that surely will take at least another decade to come. Therefore, at this stage such application will be practically facing some real difficulty to be implemented in those areas.

“The biggest challenge in Africa is that the internet is insufficient, although there are some expectations to install viber optic cable systems but that surely will take at least one decade to come. In my opinion, at least in this stage the application will be realistically facing real difficulty to be implemented in Africa.” (Abdallah, M. 24 May 2016.)

As stated by human resources professor interviewed in this research the issue of internet access is a major challenge, particularly, in African continent. Arguing that without further developments or advances in technology it will be very difficult for any organisation in Africa to use this application, the only possible way is to first get sufficient internet capabilities in the wider region which is not something every company can control. But to take advantage of this application one would want to invest more resources on internet capacity which will be quite expensive and still will prove challenging for the time being. (Abdallah, M. 24 May 2016.)

4.3 Benefits of Using Mobile app for appraising

The use of mobile applications in employee performance evaluation yields huge benefits for both organisations and employees. Likewise, the use of this application for the above mentioned purpose would lift tremendous weight off the managers since they are under

continuous challenge in maintaining employee productivity and to get highest possible performance from them. Some of the immediate benefits of the application are detailed in the following table, perhaps, these are only small portion of the perceived benefits that using mobile app for appraising would produce.

Table 2: Advantages of using Mobile App for Appraising Employees

Benefit	Description
Improve communication	Creates channel of communication. Encourages stuff to share information across in a simple and easy manner.
Provide more frequent checks	Continuous and endless employee discussion and assessment throughout. Substantial check-ins. Continues interaction.
Continues coaching	Real-time interaction. Guidance and quick solution to any problems.
Bias is eliminated	No rating scale used. Effective team collaboration, employee empowerment, feedback and cross functional attitude
Feedback	Data shared through various applications: Quick polls, filling in short forms and perhaps exploiting the rich integration of the popular social media platforms in order to generate comprehensive feedback
Information follow	Direct and constant interaction from both manager/supervisor and the employee.

5 Conclusions

Employee performance appraisal is one of the most difficult management tasks undertaken by line managers and human resources departments, various academics and HR professionals have conducted numerous researches, written countless books and articles about the issues of this subject but with no avail. The author has chosen this topic to explore new directions that might produce lasting answer to the troublesome annual review. The author decided to research the use of Mobile app for employee performance appraisals, a new area which has not so far seen much emphasis but with great potential if properly researched.

Using mobile app for employee performance appraisal provides several benefits that increase the efficiency of the process, for instance, utilising this tool will increase communication and opens direct communication channels between managers and employees. Where management can convey instant guidance and advise or corrections (McWherther & Gowell 2012, 22.) This improves employee performance and overall productivity.

Businesses would capitalise on the mobile app system to exchange real-time information, feedback and reflection from workers to measure individual performances comparing it against the pre-set organisational standards. This new method of conducting evaluation also creates platform for line managers to give guidance and quick solution to any problems that employee is facing in any particular moment in their duties, using mobile app for appraising boosts effective team collaboration, employee empowerment, feedback and cross functional attitude which are performed in a simple and easy manner.

However, using mobile app for employee appraisal procedures comes with numerous challenges and problems that hinder the possibility of implementing it globally. Some academics have argued the applicability of such system in countries where availability of internet connection is limited, albeit this obstacle might be tackled by installing high speed internet connections in those regions which will pave the way for organisations to take advantage of the technology and specifically the mobile app system phenomenon. (Mkunda, I. 10 May 2016.)

5.1 Limitations

Given the complexity of the topic and the fact that there is not much written about it there was foreseeable hurdles from the beginning where the author anticipated and planned to overcome, a topic of this magnitude with scarce data available specially the mobile application part. It has proven to be really challenging to find enough and comprehensive information. There has not been robust data generated so far for this subject area and certainly there is no variety of sources to strongly rely on apart from websites, articles, journals and few inconclusive books.

Furthermore, the lack of commissioning body or organisation that could give guidelines and benchmark on their preferences which might have helped the author to focus specific area compounded the problem and the difficulty encountered along the way.

5.2 Recommendation for Further research

Using mobile app in the employee performance review process is quite new phenomenon which brings both immediate benefits and challenges. The research recommends that a more in-depth and thorough study should be conducted to justify the importance, applicability and the advantages and disadvantages of the subject. as the concept progresses further, the significance and overall contribution of mobile app system to the employee performance evaluations should be firmly established. Also to determined where exactly these benefits are coming from the topic requires further research.

5.3 Own learning

This research paper has presented somewhat mixed perspectives to the author both in a challenging and learning way, the topic itself was extremely complex and challenging which prompted the researcher to put extra effort and determination to gather quality and reliable data. This endeavour has been a learning process for the researcher which ensured to explore new ideas and gain new knowledge from the subject, the author has grown personally and professionally during the research from the wealth of data and information accumulated.

The huge time invested in this research reflects the extent knowledge gained from it, particularly the link between mobile apps and the actual performance appraisal processes. Learnt a lot from the new thinking and direction of PA, and most of all learned the challenges and issues surrounding the topic in general.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Abbreviation list

PA: Performance appraisal

PM: performance Management

MA: Mobile Application

HR: Human Resources

App: Application

OA: Online Application

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

Interview Questions (Overseas)

1. How would you describe current employee performance review systems and what are its main components/ objectives?
2. What are the core criteria for employee performance assessment?
3. How can appraisal system be used as a tool in order to motivate and shape employee's career development?
4. Its widely understood performance reviews are problematic and people hate them, what are the main reasons for this?
5. Performance appraisals have been facing huge criticism in the past, some researchers pointed out lack of effective interaction between managers and subordinates as the cause, do you think if companies exploited mobile app technology would solve the problem?
6. Many major corporations such as GE, Accenture, Deloitte have lately decided to scrap annual review systems and adopt mobile app systems for appraising, is this trend the future of employee performance appraising? / do you see this trend as the future of employee performance appraisals?
7. How important is an app to improve efficiency of review processes?
8. What would you expect to achieve from using the mobile app in the performance appraisal process?
9. Mobile app technology and internet access are almost made for each other; we know this is big problem for the whole continent, does this mean the app isn't applicable?
10. Using Mobile app for appraising require sufficient internet access in terms of data load and being able to be active all the time to interact, how would you deal with this issue?
11. In general, why performance appraisal procedures fail?

Appendix 3. Interview Questions

Interview Questions (Local)

1. How would you describe an effective employee performance review system and what are its main components/ objectives?
2. What are the core criteria for employee performance assessment?
3. How can appraisal system be used as a tool in order to motivate and shape employee's career development?
4. It's widely understood performance reviews are problematic and people hate them, what are the main reasons for this?
5. Have you experienced or encountered such problems?
6. Performance appraisals have been facing huge criticism in the past, some researchers pointed out lack of effective interaction between managers and subordinates as the cause, how do you think if companies exploited mobile app technology would solve the problem?
7. Many major corporations such as GE, Accenture, Deloitte have lately decided to scrap annual review systems and some of them specifically adopt mobile app systems for appraising, do you see this trend as the future of appraising employee performances?
8. How important is an app system to improve efficiency of review processes?
9. What would you expect to achieve from using the mobile app in the performance appraisal process?
10. In general, why performance appraisal procedures fail?

Appendix 4. Overlay matrix

Investigative questions	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Outcomes
IQ1: Why hr departments should have own performance appraisal app?	Expectancy theory, Goal-setting theory. Books, Thesis, Articles and journals on Mobile apps and Human resource management phenomenon and trends	Desktop Study, Conduct qualitative interviews	Concrete information/data to understand the importance of apps in appraising. Qualitative analysis
IQ2: What are the advantages of utilizing mobile apps for employee appraisals and How it motivates?	Expectancy theory, Goal-setting theory. Books, Thesis, Articles and journals on mobile apps and Human resource management phenomenon and trends	Desktop Study, Conduct interviews	Gather valuable data that will enable me understand the challenges, pros and cons to this subject and finally reach conclusive analysis, get qualitative analysis based on the respondents
IQ3: How HR departments' own performance appraisal app system could be developed?	Articles, journals, websites about recent	Desktop Study, Knowledge base	Thoughts and ideas to make suggestions of how the app

	development of apps and trends		might be de- veloped
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